

**Avena barbata Brot. (Poaceae)**  
**Slender wild oat**

**Description.** Annual, 3-6 (8) dm tall, erect, stems erect, glabrous to short-soft-hairy. Leaves alternate; ligules 1-4 mm long, lacerate, auricles absent; sheaths glabrous to pubescent; blades linear, flat, 1-5 mm wide, glabrous to soft-puberulent. Inflorescence an open terminal panicle, 3-10 cm long. Spikelets 20-30 mm long, slightly compressed, composed of 3-8 florets, the glumes linear to narrowly lanceolate, the lower one 5-10 mm long, 1-nerved, the upper one 8-13 mm long, 3-nerved; lemmas 12-17 mm long, lanceolate, 3-5-nerved, the back keeled to rounded, the apex with two lateral teeth 4-5 mm long, the back of the lemma with a bent awn 12-20 mm long. In California, flowering from March to June. (Arnow 1987, Hitchcock 1944, Holmgren and Holmgren 1977, Munz 1959, Rocha Afonso 1980, Wilken 1993).

**Note:** Originally believed derived from *A. fatua*, *A. barbata* most likely arose independently as a polyploid derivative of two other species, *Avena hirtula* and *Avena wiestii* (Alicchio et al. 1995, García et al. 1991, Katsiotis 1997, Ladizinsky 1995). *Avena fatua*, a close relative of *A. sativa* (cultivated oat), may have evolved in response to early cultivation, first as a crop, and later coincident with cereal production (Hjelmquist 1955, Lindsay 1956, Sexsmith 1967). Darmency and Aujas (1992) found genetic variation for growth rates and competitive ability in *A. fatua*.

**Geographic distribution.** A native of Europe, slender wild oat has been introduced into western North America, southern Africa, and South America (Arnold and de Wet 1993, Arnow 1987, Gibbs Russell et al. 1955, Holmgren and Holmgren 1977, Montenegro et al. 1991, Munz 1959, Romero Zarco 1996). However, the related Eurasian *A. fatua*, has been introduced and has become naturalized, in addition to the above, in Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii and Japan (Chapman 1991, Holm et al. 1977, Ohwi 1965, Wagner et al. 1990, Webb et al. 1988).

*Avena barbata* was first reported from California by Vasey (1885), although it probably had become widespread much earlier (Robbins 1940). *Avena barbata* was probably introduced into California more than once during the 18th century. However, recent studies suggest that nearly all naturalized California strains are most closely related to those found in southwestern Spain (de la Vega 1991, Garcia et al. 1989). Cluster and Allard (1995) and Rai (1985) also provided evidence showing that significant ecotypic differentiation may have taken place in California within the last 150-200 generations (perhaps less than 150-200 years). *Avena fatua* also was well established before the end of the 18th century (Hendry and Bellue 1925, Robbins 1940).

Both species have been reported from all northern California Channel Islands and Santa Barbara Island (Junak et al. 1997) and are widespread in most California counties west of the Great Basin and deserts (Anonymous 1998, Wilken 1993).

**Reproductive and vegetative biology.** Both *Avena barbata* and *A. fatua* are self-compatible and strongly selfing (Clegg and Allard 1972, Imam and Allard 1965), despite their dependency on wind-pollination. Populations in California show considerable ecological differentiation with respect to allozymes (Hamrick and Allard 1972). Both *Avena barbata* and *A. fatua* are characterized by considerable genetic variation (e.g., Jain 1969, Jain and Marshall 1970, Jain and Rai 1974, Jain et al. 1981, Marshall and Jain 1969), including such traits as growth rates, seed dormancy, and germination responses (Somersalo et al. 1988, Thurston 1963). *Avena fatua* shows a broad range of response to regional climates, including the ability to flower and produce seeds at any time of the year in subtropical climates (Jain 1969, Thurston 1959, 1963). Persistence in cultivated fields may also depend on variation in seed dormancy and germination responses (Banting 1996).

Seeds of *A. fatua* generally germinate in the late fall and early winter, depending on soil moisture, in warm and cool temperate climates (Fernandez-Quinantilla et al. 1990). Germination

rates of fresh seeds can exceed 50% under most temperate conditions, leading to immediate recruitment following the first seasonal rains (Fernandez-Quinantilla et al. 1990, Thurston 1962). However, seeds can remain dormant or undergo secondary dormancy, especially under cold conditions (Fregeau and Burrows 1989, Sawhney 1989). Dormancy is generally broken by a combination of moisture and relatively warm (20° to 40° C) soil conditions (Foley 1994). Although seeds buried as deep as 20 cm can germinate and produce viable seedlings, buried seeds may remain dormant from 4 to 7 years, unless exposed by deep cultivation and short-days, followed by relatively warm, moist conditions (Conn 1990, Hilton 1985, Hilton and Bitterli 1983, Johnston et al. 1994, Miller and Nalewaja 1990, Thurston 1961, 1962).

Plants grow relatively rapidly in Europe, with flowering and fruiting dependent on soil nutrients, density of associated species, and the extent of spring rains (Cousens et al. 1992). In California oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) savanna, *Avena fatua* is generally restricted to open sunny sites, displaying reduced growth and lower competitive ability under shade (Maranon and Bartolome 1993). Hobbs (1986) provided evidence that over the long-term, *Avena* and other annual grassland species are slowly replaced by coastal sage scrub under some conditions. Although plants of *A. barbata* show reduced fruit production under drought conditions, the mean fruit weight remained relatively uniform (Ewing and Menke 1983a, 1983b). In California, natural populations of *Avena fatua* can have strong allelopathic effects (Tinnin and Muller 1971a, 1971b). Under experimental conditions, root exudates of *A. fatua* are allelopathic to several different crop seeds (Perez and Ormeno-Nunez 1991).

**Ecological distribution.** Both *Avena barbata* and *A. fatua* occur in dry cultivated fields, roadsides, waste places, formerly tilled fields, and grazed pastures, although the latter species tends to be restricted to disturbed or formerly tilled sites (Arnou 1987, Baum et al. 1972, Holmgren and Holmgren 1977, Munz 1959, Rocha Afonso 1980, Wilken 1993, Stromberg and Griffin 1996)

**Weed status.** *Avena barbata* is not considered a noxious weed in agricultural or horticultural practice, at least at a global level (not listed by Holm et al. 1977), nor is it considered a noxious weed by the State Dept. of Food and Agriculture (Anonymous 1996). It is not listed for the United States in Lorenzi and Jeffery (1987). In contrast, *A. fatua* is one of the most widespread and serious weeds of the world, primarily in cultivated cereal crops (Holm et al. 1977, Lindsay 1956, Lorenzi and Jeffery 1987), probably as a result of its widespread cultivation for grain and later as a hay crop for over 2,000 years (Hjelmquist 1955, Jessen and Helbaek 1945, Coffman 1961).

**Microbial pathogens.** *Avena* species can serve as hosts to dwarf mosaic viruses, but infections in *Avena fatua* and *A. sativa* were not found to be virulent (Achon et al. 1996). Smut and mildew fungi (*Ustilago avenae*, *Erysiphe graminis*) have been reported from *Avena barbata* and *A. fatua* (Nielsen 1993, Sabri et al. 1997, Sabri and Clarke 1996). *Avena barbata* includes strains both susceptible and resistant to infection by *Puccinia* rust fungi (Karow et al. 1997, Katsiotis and Forsberg 1995). Both *Avena fatua* and *A. sativa* are hosts to *Puccinia coronata* and *P. graminis*, which often cause significant damage to plants under cultivation in Canada (Chong 1988, 1990, Chuang and Harder 1991, Chong and Seaman 1989, 1990, Harder 1989, Harder and Dale 1990, Kolmer and Chong 1993). Douglas et al. (1996, 1997) summarized and evaluated a program that used *Puccinia coronata* as a biocontrol of *Avena barbata* on San Clemente Island.

*Avena barbata* growth may be enhanced by mycorrhizal infection (Rillig et al. 1998). Infection by mycorrhizal fungi (*Glomus etunicatum*, *G. intraradices*) enhanced growth of *Avena fatua* in cultivated fields of *Avena sativa*. (Koide et al. 1988, Koide and Lu 1992, Lu and Koide 1991).

**Insect pathogens.** No literature was found that reported insects detrimental to *Avena barbata* or *A. fatua*, although the latter has been reported as a incidental host to Mirid bugs (*Calocoris norvegicus*) infesting pistachios (Purcell and Welter 1990).

**Herbicide control.** Price et al. (1988) described the use of barban and difenzoquat in controlling *Avena barbata*. Numerous studies have evaluated the use of several herbicides in controlling *A. fatua*, including chlorsulfuron, diclofop-methyl, dipenzoquat, flamprop-methyl, fluazifop, glyphosate, haloxyfop, metribuzin, quizalofop, sethoxydim, 2,4-D, and triallate (Chow 1988, Donald 1990, Eberlein et al. 1988, Friesen 1988, Harker and O'Sullivan 1988, Jam and van den Born 1989, Kafiz et al. 1989, Kirkland et al. 1989, Kudsk 1988, Martin et al. 1989, Miller 1990, Morrison 1990, Thai et al. 1989, Warkintin et al. 1988). Nietschke (1996) and Nietschke and Medd (1996) provided general reviews on control of *Avena fatua* in cultivated crops.

Combinations of flurtamone and ethalfiuralin was shown to be more effective against *A. fatua* than either alone (Blackshaw et al. 1992). Harker et al (1995) reported successful treatment of *Avena fatua* with ethametsulfuron when mixed with sethoxydim, but other combinations (with haloxyfop, fluazifop, and quizalofop) caused significant injury to the associated dicot crop (canola). Wall (1994) found mixtures of fluazifop and clethodim effective in controlling annual grasses, including *Avena*, in flax fields. Wells (1989) reported enhanced effect of glyphosate treatments using adjuvants in control of *Avena fatua*. Grayson et al. (1995) and Murphy et al. (1995) reported similar results with flamprop-m-isopropyl. Ammonium sulfate increased the efficacy of sethoxydim in experimental plants of *Avena fatua* (Smith and Vanden Born 1992). Ahrens and Ehr (1991) reported enhanced efficacy of atrazine-cyanazine mixtures when plants of *Avena fatua* were treated with tridiphane. Sodium bisulfate enhanced the effect of imazamethabenz in controlling *Avena fatua* (Liu et al 1995). Xie et al. (1994, 1997) reported effective control of *Avena fatua* using mixtures of imazamethabenz and fenoxaprop under drought conditions.

In contrast, Jensen and Caseley (1990) reported antagonistic effects of 2,4-D amine and bentazone with tralkoxydim in attempts to control *Avena fatua*. Eberlein, et al. (1988) studied antagonistic combinations of herbicides, showing that, in some cases, thiameturon interfered significantly with diclofop control of *Avena fatua*.

Strains of *Avena fatua* resistant to atrazine, diclofop, triallate, cyclohexanedione, and aryloxyphenoxypropionate have been reported by Powles and Stewart (1990), Devine et al. (1992), Joseph et al. (1990), Morrison and Devine (1995), and Seefeldt et al. 1994). Kibite et al. (1995) studied inheritance of genes conferring resistance to diclofop and fenoxaprop -p-ethyl in *Avena sativa* x *A. fatua* hybrids. However, strains resistant to triallate were susceptible to and could be controlled by atrazine, ethalfiuralin, fenoxaprop-P, flamprop, imazamethabenz, and tralkoxydim (Blackshaw et al. 1996). Thill et al. (1994) evaluated and discussed Integrated weed management strategies for delaying the evolution of herbicide resistance in *Avena fatua*.

**Other control methods.** The use of organic mulches enhanced the competitive ability of outplanted *Artemisia californica* over *Avena fatua* in potential coastal sage scrub communities (Zink and Allen 1998).

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